

Tackling risk factors to boost fleet efficiency

Employers have a legal and moral obligation to ensure the safety of their staff but road risk is too often overlooked as a critical factor. The following white paper reveals how fleet management technology can help tackle road risk factors to reap substantial rewards.

A potentially fatal problem

Safety is a critical issue for any business. The financial, legislative and human consequences for failing to safeguard the health of wellbeing of employees can be grave, so it is crucial to get a handle on all the potential risk factors and take necessary action to limit their impact.

Perhaps the single biggest source of risk is a company's vehicle fleet. Every year, almost 30,000 lives are lost on Europe's roads¹ and up to a third of all road traffic accidents are believed to be work related.² Even more worryingly, employees who drive more than 25,000 miles a year have at least a one in 8,000 chance of dying behind the wheel of their company vehicle.³

Furthermore, it is estimated that a third of all deaths from workplace accidents are related to transport,⁴ so businesses simply must take action, especially as the consequences can be prosecution or even jail time.

Establishing a safety-first culture

A number of steps can be taken to guarantee greater safety for company drivers and the results can be spectacular - from reduced fuel costs and insurance premiums to improved staff morale.

For starters, a company should carry out risk assessments for every company vehicle, much as they would do in the office environment. A vehicle is a place of work and should be treated as such, with all necessary action taken to ensure a safe environment.

Simply by ensuring all vehicles are well maintained and fit for purpose, a business can significantly improve working conditions - regular services and checks on elements such as oil and tyre pressure are vital. Fleet management technology can help in this respect, with advanced systems capable of reporting trouble codes directly from the vehicle's engine.



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It is also essential to ensure employees are fit for work too, putting in place initiatives such as regular eye tests, physical examinations and driver licence checks. Perhaps more important, however, is the need to affect a cultural shift. Even if an organisation takes the necessary steps to reduce risk, there is no guarantee its employees will do the same.

Laying the foundations for change

The first steps to achieving this cultural change can be made by establishing a company-wide road safety policy. Advice and guidance should be offered to staff on an ongoing basis and guidelines can be solidified through publication of an official company handbook, which should be updated regularly to reflect changes in legislation or working conditions.

Creation of a driver safety committee, comprising representatives from management and staff, is also a useful mechanism for enforcing change but any such initiatives depend upon proper measurement to be truly successful.

This is where technology plays an absolutely vital role. Once safety guidelines, KPIs and performance benchmarks have been established, an advanced fleet management system will help to enforce any changes and significantly alter driver attitudes.

Are staff on best behaviour?

Fatigue is one of the biggest factors affecting a driver's ability to do their job but a fleet management system can make sure they never exceed their allocated working hours.

Rather than relying on assurances provided by the driver, management can use the system to gain incontrovertible proof of start and finish times, as well as the time taken to complete any given journey. These figures can be automatically inputted into timesheets and employees can be reminded to take breaks at appropriate intervals via messages sent directly to their in-cab navigation devices.

Beyond the monitoring of hours, advanced fleet management technology can effect even greater change by encouraging staff to adopt a safer, more efficient driving style, drastically reducing the risk they pose.

By tapping into vehicle diagnostics, these systems provide a previously unimaginable level of insight into habits and behaviour behind the wheel. Managers can access a full statistical breakdown for each driver according to key elements of safe and efficient driving, such as idling, fuel consumption and even harsh steering or braking.

The technology then uses this data to create accurate behavioural profiles over time, which facilitate the identification of problem trends, allowing a company to pinpoint where unnecessary risks are being taken. As a result, training time and budget can be allocated more precisely, ensuring a reduction in wasted resources.

Incentivising improvements in safety

Often, with schemes that so fundamentally alter attitudes towards work, there can be resistance from staff. This may be natural but it can also be easily surmounted through a transparent, inclusive approach.

By formalising the change process, putting proposals in writing and holding consultations - giving staff the chance to ask questions and make suggestions - management can ensure the potential implications and benefits are fully understood.



When it comes to addressing driver behaviour, the carrot usually proves more effective than the stick. As well as offering constructive criticism, positive feedback should be provided where appropriate and a culture of positive reinforcement will create advocates among the workforce and foster a spirit of healthy competition. Incentive schemes are key to this approach, allowing drivers to be rewarded when they have met or exceeded safety KPIs.

Benefits beyond the obvious

Improved safety standards will result in an improved risk profile. As a result, companies are empowered to make substantial insurance premium savings by demonstrating efforts have been made to reduce the potential impact of fleet liabilities.

A number of insurers have developed innovative products that specifically use the insight gained from fleet management technology to offer reduced premiums and risk engineering support. More information on this is available in our insurance white paper.

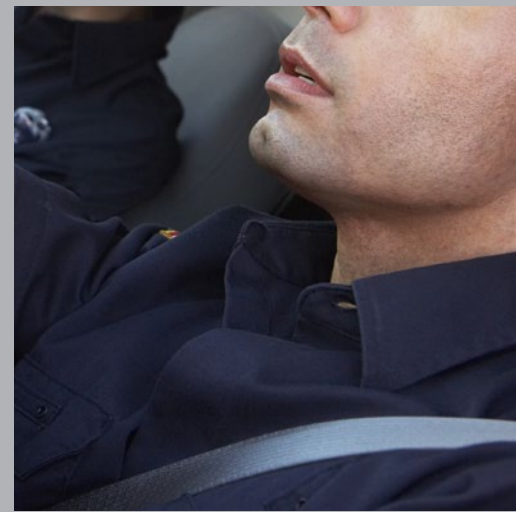
Furthermore, any scheme to reduce risk centred on driver behaviour will also result in reduced fuel consumption and CO2 emissions. All these benefits, taken together, can make a business more competitive, while establishing it as an industry-leading, responsible employer.

1 European Commission, Road safety trends, statistics and challenges in the EU 2011-2012

2 European Road Safety Observatory, 2007

3 RoSPA, UK Transport Research Laboratory 2008

4 European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), 2001a



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